

The C.A. McGregor House
Kim Jones and Deepti Pankaj
September 6, 1991

C.A. McGregor House

- I. History of C.A. McGregor
 - A. Son of John H. McGregor and Mary T. Buxton
 - 1. March 14, 1843
 - 2. Four 3 bros., 2 sisters - Alonzo H. Burton, Alex - died in infancy, Elizabeth J., Emma
 - B. Schooling
 - 1. Elementary - public
 - 2. 1861-62 Dickinson Coll. Carlisle Penn
 - C. C.A.'s immediate family
 - 1. Nov. 23, 1871 married Eunice Johnson
 - 2. May 24, 1875 - Bernice E.
 - 3. Sept. 12, 1879 - Ellis J.
 - 4. Jan. 19, 1883 - Lewis C.
 - 5. Mary E. died in infancy in July of 1873
 - 6. Janette died in June 1886 at the age of 2 with measles
 - 7. Wife Eunice died on Dec. 7, 1886
 - D. C.A. served in the Northern Army in the civil war
 - 1. 1863- 1865
 - 2. in on battles around Richmond and Petersburg
- II. C.A. in business and prominence in Pontiac
 - A. 13 yrs. worked in drug store for 7 yrs.
 - 1. learned druggist trade
 - 2. learned ropes of managing a business
 - B. Went into business
 - 1. 1867 went into partnership with J.A. Caldwell
 - 2. Named it CALDWELL & MCGREGOR
 - 3. 1872 built store on cor. of Mill and Madison
 - a. 20 x 110 feet
 - b. two stories
 - c. one of the best businesses at that time
 - 4. They had the latest drug trade in this part of Illinois.
 - 5. store had jewelry, silverware, books stationery, wall paper, etc...
 - 6. February 1895 C.A. purchased Caldwell's shares and owned his own business
 - 7. Eventually he owned 6 buildings in Pontiac's business area
 - C. Newspaper
 - 1. "Free Trader"

2.C.A. purchased it with his bro.-in-law E.M. Johnson for \$150 in Oct. 1871

3.Were second owners, but were the ones to make it grow and prosper.

4.Was a Democratic news. that was an organ of the anti-monopoly movement?????????

D. Serving his community

1.Postmaster from 1869-1870

2.Served several times as alderman from his ward

3.Helped to Estb.Pontiac Public Library

4.Served sev. times as township treasurer

E.His wealth

1.owned considerable residence property

2.with his children owned sev. farms

3.early stockholder of Liv. Coun. Nat. Bank

4.one of original stockholders in P.N.B.

5.Had been a director of both banks

III. The house

A.April 1 - 7 , 1882 purchased the NW lot on Wash. for \$800

B.May 19-26,1882, C.A. in Joliet purchasing stone house.

C.June 2-9, 1882, foundation done, frame of the house to be raised the next week.

D.July 21- 28, 1882 C.A.'s has begun to get painted and plastered.

E.August 11-18, 1882 house inside is almost done and it is receiving a second coat of paint.

F.Sept. 1-8,1882 Expected to move in around Oct. 1st.

G.Monday, October 16,1882 moved into house. Yard and surroundings poor but must wait till spring.

IV. House Description

A. Style

1.Victorian

2.Many Motifs

3.Very large

4.Cupola

B. Structure

1.built with walnut from property

2.limestone foundation

3.octagon front with large porch across front

C.Interesting Interior

1.3 floors and a basement

2.4 staircases to basement, attic, 2 to 2nd floor

3.winding staircase owners believe is original

4.elevator-in by Bernice and Lewis in '50s

5.5 bedrooms 2nd floor, dining, living rooms in front of house, behind are kitchen and family rooms

6.34 windows one we know of has replaced in kitchen

7.2 plantation windows- ceiling to floor open upstairs wall walk form dining and living rooms to the porch through them

8.2 original fireplaces

9.original pocket doors

10.3 doors

V. Owners of house

A.C.A. first owner

B.C.A.'s children, Hillyers, Sullivans, Bhuerig,
Bloom. Fed, Nelsons,

C.Current owners Brenda and Arthur Thompson

The C.A. McGregor House

1.

The history of Pontiac includes many prominent citizens, businesses, and homes. Though the businesses and homes may have often changed hands through the years, the original owners are always intriguing. One of the oldest homes in Pontiac has a particularly interesting background. This house, located at 304 East Washington Street is presently called the C.A. McGregor House.

Charles A. McGregor was born to John H. McGregor and Mary T. Buxton-McGregor on March 14, 1843. Three brothers and two sisters were also born to C.A.'s Parents; namely, Alonzo H. Burton, Alex, who died in infancy, Elizabeth J. and Emma. C.A. attended a public elementary school and then Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania during 1861-1862. He left Pennsylvania to join the Northern forces in the Civil War. While serving his country from 1863-1865, Charles took part in many of the battles near Richmond, Kentucky.

After the War, C.A. married Miss Eunice Johnson on November 23, 1871. They had five children; Mary, who died on July 20, 1873, at the age of nine months and nine days old, then Bernice E. was born on May 24, 1875, next Ellis T. was born on September 12, 1879, Late was Lewis C. on January 19, 1883, and lastly Janette who contracted measles and died in June of 1886 at the age of two. Later that year, the family was again stricken with sorrow as a result of Eunice's early death from the disease consumption on on December seventh.

In between serving in the war and marrying Eunice, C.A. used his past knowledge of the drug trade and of business management to open a store with J.A. Caldwell. He had gained this experience while serving as an apprentice in a drug store for seven years, starting when he was thirteen. Their establishment, CALDWELL & MCGREGOR, which sold prescription and over the counter medicines, books jewelry, wallpaper, silverware, and, stationery, along with other items, was initiated in 1867. The partners later built a 20x110 foot, two story building on the present corner of Mill and Madison streets, in 1872. This store was quite nice for its time and had one of the most updated drug trades in this section of the state. Eventually, in 1895, McGregor bought out Caldwell's shares in the business, changing the name to C.A. MCGREGOR & SONS.

Another of C.A.'s business ventures was the "Free Trader." This Democratic newspaper was purchased for \$150 in October, 1871. Although his brother-in-law, E.M. Johnson, and he were the second owners of the publication, its success was wholly due to their management of it.

Through his business skills, he established a very distinguish reputation for himself. To uphold this respectability, he served his community in many ways. For example, he served as postmaster from 1869-1870. In addition, he was alderman and town treasurer many times. More importantly, he helped establish the Pontiac

Public Library, the Livingston County National Bank, and the Pontiac National Bank. He also was once the director of both banks.

Mr. McGregor was decidedly a wealthy man. He owned a considerable amount of residential property, six buildings in the business district, and with his children owned several farms. Using his wealth, C.A. bought the northwest lot of block number 56 which was and still is 304 East Washington Street. After purchasing the lot on April 7, 1882, he drew up plans himself for the home to be built there. He then went to Joliet in the third week of May to buy stone for his home, and only paid 12 cents per foot for it. Later, in the week of June 2 through the 9th, the foundation was finished and the frame was to be raised the next week. Painting and plastering was begun in the last week of July. During August 11-18, the inside was getting the final touches and the second coat on the outside was being finished. Although they were expected to move in around October first, they did not move in until October sixteenth, 1882, and even though the yard was in poor condition, they had to wait until Spring to shape it up.

C.A.'s home was a Victorian style home. Therefore, it was very large and had a cupola. It also had many motifs decorating the porch, the windows, the cupola, and the

overhang of the roof. Since the house was of such tremendous size he made the foundation from big blocks of limestone and in certain areas used big timbers for more support. Part of the house was built from the walnut trees on the lot. The house had an octagon front with a porch stretching across the entire front side.

In addition to the intriguing looks of the outside, the McGregor home has a very interesting interior. Having three floors and a basement means there must be many entrances to these floors. For example, there are four staircases, going to the attic, basement, and to the second floor. One of the two staircases to the second floor is a very elegant winding wooden stairway. It is thought by the current owners that the staircase contains original wood and lathe work. Another access to the second floor is the elevator. Although it was not originally installed by C.A., it was installed around the 1950s by his daughter Bernice and son Lewis. The house also has three entrances on the first floor. On the second floor there are five bedrooms, and the master bedroom has one of the two original fireplaces in it. On the first floor is a family room, a kitchen, a dining room, and a living room. In the living and dining rooms there are windows called plantation windows that extend from the ceiling to the floor and open up into the wall upstairs. These windows are facing the front porch and were made that way so

that a person could open it up and walk out onto the porch. 5.
These windows are only two of the thirty four that exist in
the house. Another interesting point about the two rooms is
that they are divided by two doors that work like sliding
doors but are called pocket doors. When pushed apart,
they go into the walls to save space. Even though the house
is old, it has many interesting ideas that could ease
today's life.

The house has changed hands many times since its first
owner. The owners in chronological order are: C.A.
McGregor, Bernice and Lewis McGregor, Hillyers, Sullivans,
Bhuerigs, Bloomington Federal Savings and Loan, Nelsons, and
Arthur and Brenda Thompson. The current owners, the
Thompsons, are quite comfortable living in a house with such
a grand past and are really very proud of it.

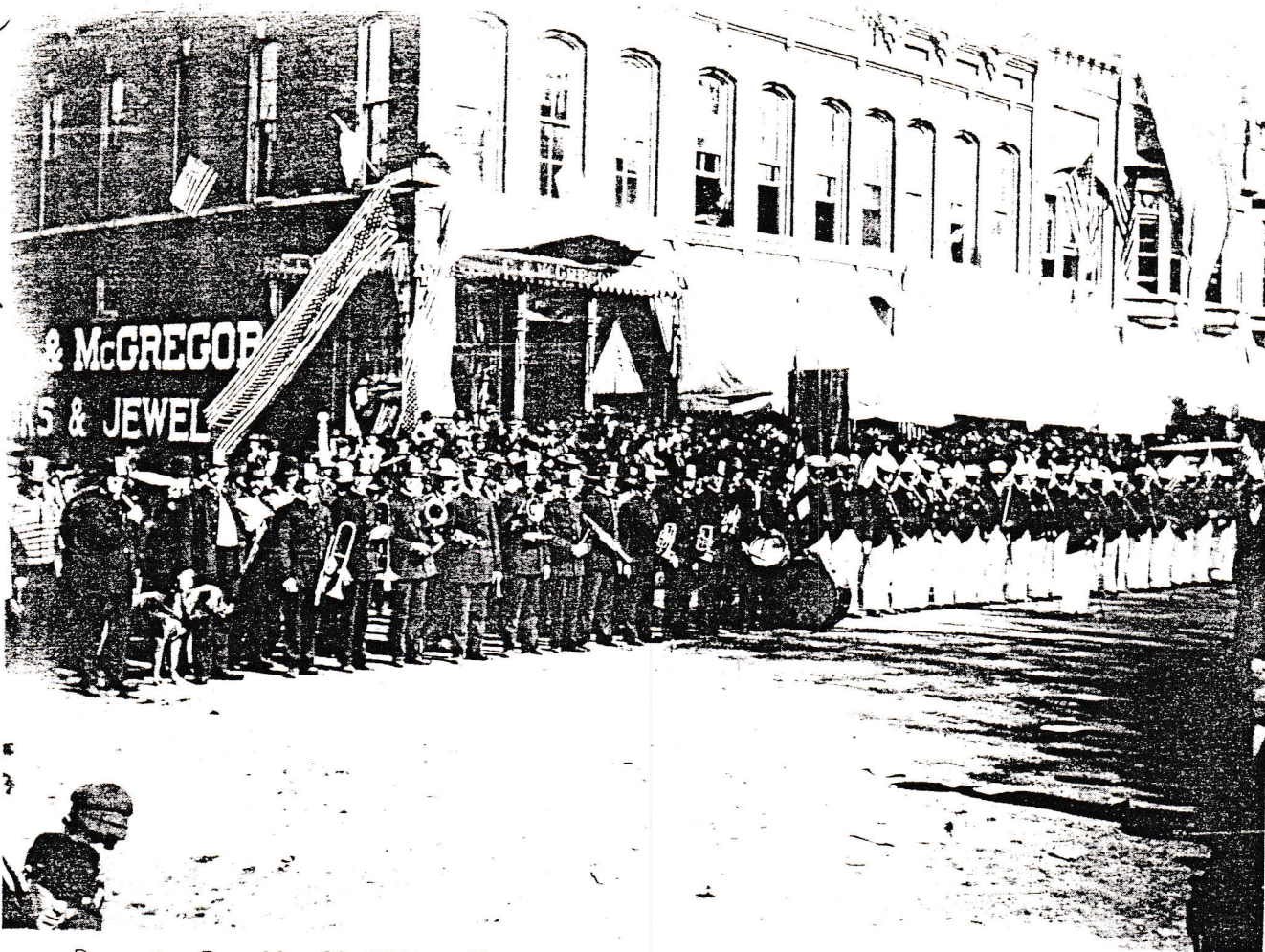


FIRST PTHS GRADUATING CLASS — There were 24 members in the first graduating class from Pontiac High School. Left to right, back row: Archie Armstrong, Ella Thompson, Walter Tuesburg, May Park, Robert Beach, Clement Reed and Frank Johnson; second row: Lida Armstrong, Superintendent

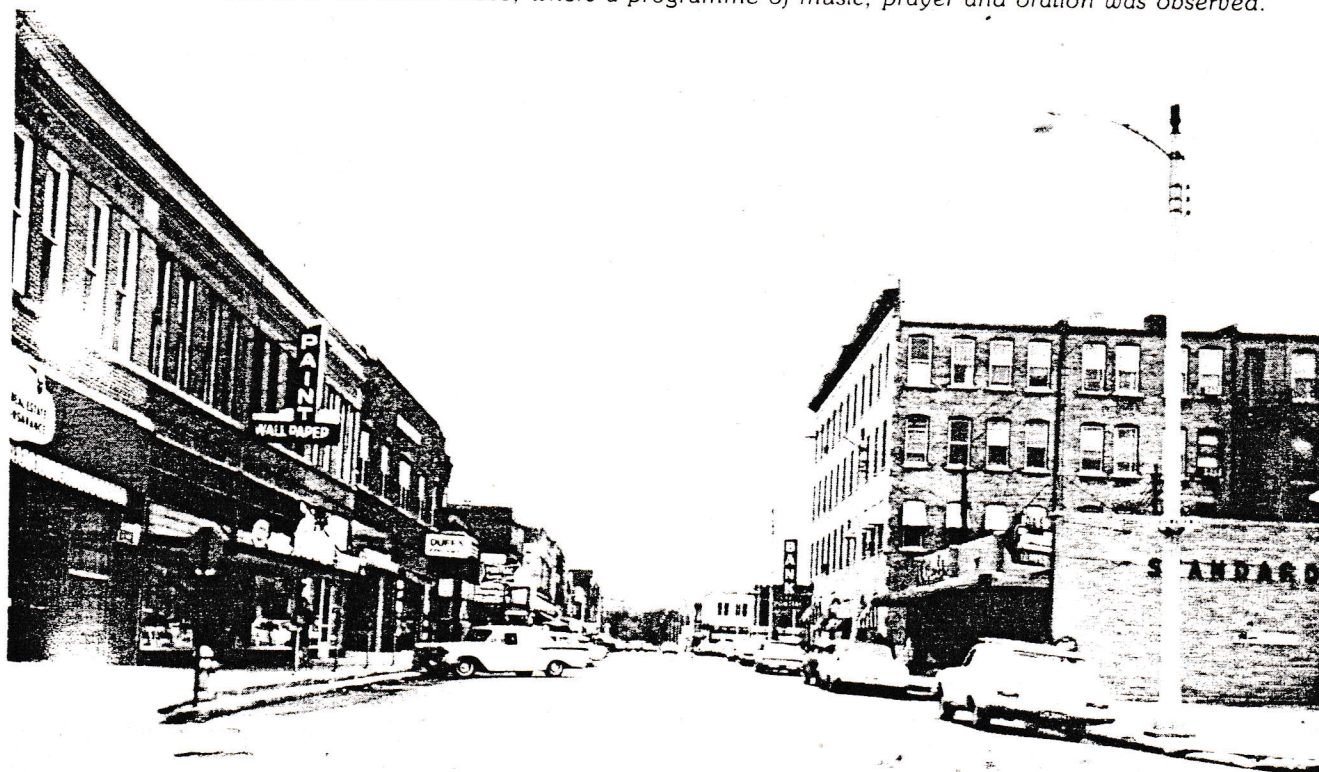
Conaha, Eva May Long, Georgia Lash, Mary E. Thompson and Lula Gaynaum; front row: Lula Woods, Eva Andrews, Arthur Taylor, Eugenia Sims, Mabelle Wallace, Guy Whitson and Amalia Gaus. Not pictured but in the class were Burton Orr and George Mallory. (Picture loaned by David Umsted.)

Before the days of electric refrigerators with ice makers, the Pierbert Ice Co. of Monticello delivered block ice to homes for the old wooden iceboxes. The ice was cut from the Vermilion River in the winter and stored in sawdust in the ice house for later delivery to customers.

SMITH & MCGREGOR



Decoration Day, May 30, 1891 — The procession formed at 1:30 o'clock p.m. at the corner of Mill and Madison streets and marched to the cemetery. After decorating the graves of the deceased soldiers, the procession returned and marched to the court house, where a programme of music, prayer and oration was observed.



Looking north on Mill Street from Water Street — 1970